

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Glenda Howze, Assistant to the Gallatin County Commissioners and here today on their behalf. The Gallatin County Commissioners are very much in support of Senate Bill 191. Gallatin County as well as many other Montana counties has experienced unprecedented growth in the last decade. With this growth has come a significant impact on our judicial system. Gallatin County has added a third District Court Judge and is now looking at the possibility of a fourth in the year 2010 to handle the tremendous court load. The need for and importance of court security has also grown significantly in the past few years as well. As you all know, the resources of local government are seriously limited. Currently Gallatin County funds two deputies for the purpose of security in our three district courts and two justice courts. The annual cost for these two deputies, salaries and employer contributions only, is approximately \$126,000. While the two that we do have do an outstanding job, they are only two, with five courtrooms to cover and vacations, sick time, and other work related activities to accommodate. Providing sufficient security at all appropriate times is nearly impossible with our current funding and staffing situation. Placing a portion of the responsibility to fund the necessary equipment and staff for adequate court security should be on those that create the need for the security. This is a small fee that results in a huge benefit to the Judges, justice personnel and those citizens participating in the judicial process. The Gallatin County Commissioners urge your support of SB 191.

In addition, I'd like to distribute copies of a letter from the County Commissioners that was previously faxed to each of you and a letter from Three Forks Councilwoman Crystal Turner in support of this legislation, which will allow for more adequate security in our municipal systems as well. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Glenda Howze
Commission Assistant
Gallatin County Commission